LEVELS OF MEANING IN NARRATIVE TEXTS

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0. Introduction

Facts cannot be grasped in the raw, in concrete immediacy, they exist only in interpreted form; and so in communication we must fall back upon sign systems. That is the basic epistemological tenet of most semioticians. The same holds for story-telling: it is a form of communication subject to certain laws for the sender and the receiver of the message. We are experimenting with the formulation of some of these rules and are searching for a limited number of universals of the narrative, of possibilities logically given, of which any period renders a few accessible to the narrator. Needless to say, when viewing narrative genres as sets of codes, our interest is only in rules which are constitutive of them, since those which are not cannot be helpful in explicating the nature of story-telling. This basic principle must be borne in mind, in spite of the fact that it is difficult to draw a sharp line between the two types of signs.

Any form of communication can be called narrative which includes a story and a narrator. In story-telling the story constitutes the predicate, while the narrative speech situation the function; the two are related to each other as defined and defining. In other words, one of these groups of signs forms a story, the other constitutes a narrative speech act; the former is subordinate to the latter. The story is composed of events

and existents, and these include actions and happenings, personae and settings; the narrative act defines the modality of the story. The components of both are in a subordinate or co-ordinate relationship with each other; they can be defined only if we determine the level on which they can be placed. Moving from the direction of smaller linguistic units composing morpho-syntactic surface structures, of an obvious initial approach and stored in short-time memory, towards deeper hidden structures made up of larger and more complex parts, not accessible to direct perception, organizing semantic information, and stored in long term memory, we can distinguish four different coding and decoding levels. The first consists of the style of the text, that is the functioning of tropes and figures. The second covers time and space, two basic conditions for events, offering insight into the poetic structure of the text. The third could be called the rhetoric of narrative in the strict sense of the word, covering the relationship between the personae, that is the narrator, the narratee, and the agents in the story. The stylistic, poetic and rhetorical structures together produce a world picture, a structure of values.

We hope to avoid three dangers in our investigation. In merely describing four levels of meaning, we would give a static picture of the narrative, and this would not be correct. We should deal with organized and dynamic rather than structural form. Our aim is to develop further the morphological examination pioneered by Propp and Ingarden by focusing our attention on the changeing relationship between constant elements. Since the emphasis is on relationship, we shall try to expand the range of components

as far as possible. The evaluation of the possibilities theoretically open to the writer would lead to normative prescriptions and an unhistorical view. The Classicists tended to consider that such normative systems constituted the essence of literature; the philosophy of history developed by representatives of the Enlightenment and of Romanticism invalidated this conception. Thirdly and finally we wish to be on our guard against losing sight of the contradiction between mimesis and textuality, as we take the view that this contradiction is of the essence of literature.

At the outset we must also emphasize the limitations of our approach. Today the theoretician of literature finds himself at the crossroads of several disciplines, such as text linguistics, modal logic, sociology, psychology, semiotics, ontology, and the theory of values. His knowledge of most of these fields can be only superficial if he wishes to devote most of his time to an analysis of the mode of existence of the literary work of art, taking it for granted that it has relatively independent rules of its own. Besides this essential limitation our present essay has a formal disadvantage. Due to lack of space, it is nothing but a temporary summing up of issues many of which deserve book-length treatment. Some of these we have tried to examine more closely elsewhere. On this occasion, rather than going into details, we shall try to show how they are interrelated.

1. Style

In the light of our first reflections the basic hypothesis of this essay can be recast as follows; there is no such thing as a natural sign system, but any sign system may seem to be natural after it has been assimilated. Storytelling resembles natural language in so far as it is one among many activities governed by conventions. It is also obvious that it has no uniform grammar only a system of rule defined historically and socially determined. The narrative is always "a tacit understanding", [1] a system of institutionalized conventions which a linguistic community considers valid. Any narrative text embodies a set of presuppositions, constraints determining the semantic acceptability of a sequence of linguistic units. There can be a narrative genre which does not observe the law of the third excluded, and this lack can seem natural to those who have learned the rules of the genre.

The rules of literary sign systems may differ from those of natural languages. There is, to be sure, a hotly debated issue involved here. Let us take the following three types of connection between propositions:

1. John is bald, so he has no hair on his head.

2. John is bald, so he does not need a barber.

3. John is bald, so he has two daghters

Sequence 1. is tautological, sequence 2. explicitly, sequence 3. implicitly motivated. In natural languages the first and the third sentences may be unacceptable, in literature all three may be valid. It may well be the case that we have to resort to an old truism and

maintain that literary sign systems are extensions of natural languages. In the latter relations between propositions are generally marked by connectives which "have both semantic and pragmatic functions: they denote relations between facts and may indicate relations between (...) propositions". [2] In literature these syntactic elements may be missing or may behave with much more freedom, the disjunctive "or" may lose its exclusive character. A similar freedom characterizes literary segmentation: in natural languages sentence boundaries, as a rule, stand for speech acts and paragraphs for changes in topic; in literature this is possible but not probable. In works of art differences between intercausal and intersentential boundaries disappear altogether. We are now in a position to draw the conclusion that the rules of literary narrative are determined partly by the nature of literary art, partly by that of story-telling. The place of historiography as a genre still remains to be defined.

Conventions are outwardly gratuituous, inwardly non-arbitrary, as in the way in which we arbitrarily use the word "pear", but the use of "pear-tree" is relatively justified. Just as we cannot say that the language of literature is a departure from something else, in the same way the rule systems of the narrative must be described on the basis of their own inner logic. The writer does not simply choose among the possible forms of the narrative; the meaning of his work is determined by cultural factors. His work is "an artistic fact and <u>therefore</u> a social fact". [3] Historically-socially given narrative forms such as myth, tale, epic, parable,

legend, romance, confession, saga, chronicle, picaresque, ballad, biography, Lebensbild, historiography, and novel form a system of tradition which determines not only the conception of the writer but also that of the reader regarding what they accept as story-telling. Every genre can be defined as a competence, that is, the ideal knowledge of the form in question shared by readers within a linguistic community.

We must emphatically point out that command of the mother tongue is an indispensable condition of successfully reading not only lyric verse but also any kind of narrative work of art. Just as it would be impossible for two sentences syntactically different from each other to have the same meaning, it is simply not possible to tell the same story in various ways. Without a competence equal to that of a native speaker, the stylized character of the narrative work at the very least is beyond the reach of the reader. Since in literature deeper structures can be discerned only through surface structures, the conclusion is inescapable that because of the crucial aesthetic function of style a narrative work of art can be decoded only in one's mother tongue.

Style virtually consists in the interaction of syntactic structures known as figures and semantic phenomena generally referred to as tropes. Figures ensure the coherence of the text. The syntactic structure of any narrative text is known to be governed by three laws. A new existent is generally introduced by indefinite substantives. In other words, the notion of the existent can be associated with the concept of the "topic". The topic infers either previous reference or identification or axiom.

The connectives of the text clearly demonstrate the close relationship between sentence structure and semantics: the elements referring ahead and back (deictic words, articles, and pronouns) are still primarily syntactical, whereas the causal, part to whole, temporal, and comparative elements related to them chiefly play a semantic role. This same duality characterizes the methods of repetition of the element or the relationship between the elements: permutation (dislocation), deletion (elision), reducting semantic information, substitution, and addition (elaboration). The interrelationship of the two components of style is equally manifest in the functioning of tropes: metonymy is essentially related to deletion, whereas metaphor, usually playing the role of comment, is related to substitution.

The five basic groups of literary genres can be characterized by the dominance of one trope or another. In discursive and descriptive texts the series of presupposed and stated facts, i. e. topics and comments is defined by synecdochic relations, in lyric genres by metaphors, in story-telling by metonymy. Many genres could be interpreted as combinations of these general types. A historian tells a story, but relates events to a hierarchy of concepts; so the narrative element is combined with discursive interest. As all discursive genres, works of historiography are borderline cases between artistic and scientific discourse.

The ordering of literary descriptions may violate the rule of natural languages based on the fact that "we will usually

perceive a whole object before its parts", [4] and may invalidate the law according to which under- or over-completeness results in incoherence. Metaphor is a test case of historical relativism or conventionalism. This becomes especially clear once we have subscribed to Searle's definition and accepted that in metaphor "the speaker's utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart", [5] since it always depends on the writter's and reader's conventions what is taken as literal meaning. Independently of any historical context no linguistic utterance can be regarded as metaphorical, "the notion of literal meaning only has application against a background of assumptions", [6] a system of practices shared by a linguistic community. The same applies to causality, which cannot be identified with entailment in a logical sense.

2. Time and Space

If it is true that of the three basic tropes distinguished by rhetoricians, metaphor constituting similarity, synecdoche expressing the relationship between the part and the whole, and metonymy referring to causality, the last one plays a decisive role in story-telling, it follows that style and time structure depend on each other in narrative works. Connectives, designating presuppositions and conclusions, pronouns referring back to a topic, and deletions must obviously be taken into consideration when analysing time structure.

With certain reservations, we can state that the literary narrative is an art form that takes place in time, and in such

a text the relationship between inner and outer time is closer than that of the space inside and outside the text. Though we can talk about the space of the written form, reading, the story, and the narrative speech act, all these depend on time, that is the temporal structures of the creative and the understanding process, the events, and their transmission. It is no accident that Bakhtin introduced the concept of "chronotopos", thus reminding us that space in the novel cannot be separated from time.

Propositions connected with one topic represent both a temporal and a special unit. Although "any phrase of a sentence may express topic function", the introduction of a new topic can be recognized without much difficulty: the topic always "denotes something denoted before" [7] and is combined with definite article and pronouns. Those functions which Propp discerned in the fairy tale could be regarded as such macro-structures, and it can be safely maintained that the global composition of any genre is a hierarchy of topics. The more individual a text is, the less it conforms to one such set of macro-structures. Compositions produced by a high culture which are meant to be read as works of art obviously show a greater complexity, but the range can be relatively wide even in historiography. Macaulay's portraits of different politicians have a stereotype construction, whereas each text of Burckhardt seems to follow a specific pattern.

What are the function of topics in story-telling? First and foremost, information distribution. An easily discernible hierarchy

of topics makes it highly probable that the writer observed a rather clear-cut plan while composing his work, and the same makes it possible for the reader to give a summary of the text, paraphrasing its meaning. A strictly limited system of topics organises the propositional structure of a text so as to make its coherence explicit. The dominance of disjunctive over additive relationships, unexpected consequences, corrections, unfulfilled conditions, and contrasts are - symptoms of high culture, creating complex structures as contrasted with popular culture producing simple forms in the sense Jolles used that term. In folk genres new information is easily integrated into what is already known, because fewer conventions are involved.

Strictly limited semiotic conventions are easily deciphered. They aim at a quickening of the communicative process. In a detective story the purpose of the communication is much more obvious than in The Wings of the Dove. If "a convention is a regularity in behavior produced by a system of expectations", [8] then convention is a system of topics, a special kind of repetition. The work expects its reader to expect something to occur in the text. This second-order expectation, however, cannot be simply traced back to something called the author's intention.

Presupposition as "a semantic universal (...) explanatory of a variety of syntactic phenomena" [9] and constituting the basis of convention is of great interest for scholars working in fields as different as linguistics, logic, psychology, and all branches of philosophy. Here we can propose to tackle only those questions

which concern aesthetic relevance. This is at least partly responsible for the well-formedness of any text; and so it creates a disposition in the reader to conform to the rules of the conventional sign system(s) of a text. It is through working from precedents that we can learn what is conventional in a given work. There will always remain features of that work which appear to be unconventional, giving us freedom in our interpretation. Still, conventionality always depends on temporal factors. Tradition is a norm only for those who share it. In some way or other it is comparable to social contract. As any kind of agreement, it also has its birth, life and death. All cultural traditions collapse once, and there are different grounds on which people can reject them, consciously or unconsciously. Aesthetic value necessitates originality, which means a working in oppositon to conformity and accepted ideas. Derivative works must be invalidated by innovation, otherwise art cannot survive. Any violation of artistic conventions is a subversion of an established system of values, whereas academic work is consolatory. Since the only criteria can be the conventions interiorized by the receiver of the artistic message, all interpretations bear testimony to the way the reader as an individual perceives his own society. Past experience is associated with accepted sign systems; the understanding of our own experience is the subversion of the already known. The same text can be academic in one society and for one individual, and subversive in another society or for another individual. This is an inescapable consequence of the fact that a cultural tradition

seems to be natural for its own and arbitrary for another community. There is only one escape from historical relativism; a multiplication of cultural codes and levels of expectation. Encyclopaedic works integrating several genres from the Commedia to Finngans Wake may be cases in point. Their readers must face conflicting analogies, reminding them that convention itself is part of a system of different kinds of repetitions, together with symmetry, seriality, mise-en-abîme, quotation, variation, based on a modified repetition of signifying or signified elements or their relationship (morphological, syntactic, or semantic parallelism), proportionality, and rhythm. A definition of these phenomena is outside the scope of this essay; elsewhere we have tried to give them a somewhat more systematic treatment. [10] Here we can refer to them only as to factors bringing about a complex temporal structure.

In story-telling there are direct and indirect manifestations of temporality, since a narrator can establish a temporal, causal, or modal relationship between the events it is relating. The causal determination of the story creates the teleology of the series of events. Teleology does not always prevail in a story; the episcopic courtly romance, the picturesque story of intrigue the naturalistic and the stream of consciousness novel, or works of historiography influenced by Positivism are less familiar with it. The authors of the didactic parables of the Enlightenment, the epistolary novel of manners, the Romantic Bildungsroman, historiography influenced by Romantic philosophy of history and dialectics, and the Realistic novel led the story back to causal relationships. In contrast to the metonymic character of the story, the teleology of the narrative speech act is one of the rules which

change the least, resulting partly from the purposefulness of reading itself. It is quite possible that only avantgarde texts can be read in a circular way; anyhow, Le Chiendent and Finnegans Wake seem to be almost exceptional in this respect.

It would be expedient to introduce some kind of classification in examining time structure. We can differentiate among the chronological, durative, and iterative aspects of reading, writing, the story, and the narrative speech act. Any of these can be of crucial importance in interpreting a work. Nevertheless, it might be advisable to mention a few cases. The tension between the chronology of the events and the order in which they are related is a well-known structural phenomenon. Beginning "in medias res" has been a tradition for thousands of years. No story can relate itself, facts cannot exist without interpretation, and the cognitive ordering of events is always at odds with their interaction and the pragmatic rules of speech act sequencing. That explains why countless works are characterized by the fact that the beginning of the text denotes a later event than the beginning and end of narrative macro-speech act are often marked by conventional signs.

Whether time is syntactically unmarked or marked overtly or covertly, times used in narrative works have meaning only in comparison with each other. The story of 1984 takes place in the past compared to the narrative speech act, Molloy ends with the following sentences: "Il est minuit. La pluie fouette les vitres. Il n'était pas minuit. Il ne pleuvait pas." Setting aside widely held, albeit somewhat vague speculations concerning

the dominance of past, present, and future epic, lyric, and dramatic genres, it is much safer to maintain that story-telling is familiar only with fictional models of temporality, narrative time is potential, a system of signs, and thus a convention like perspective in painting. Since the illusion of literature is twofold, mimetic (cognitive) and textual (literal), the same must be true of narrative texts: the story is a consecutive series of events, but the narrated story is a linguistic utterances, and thus we cannot examine its verbal forms and adverbs outside the time-values of the text. We deny that "it is possible to read Balzac while Joyce, Beckett or Robbe-Grillet have to be deciphered, perhaps even decoded." [11] Some held that individual works call attention to mimesis or textuality to a greater or lesser extent. If our emphasis on convention is not misplaced, it will cast doubt on such hypotheses. It is quite possible that the sign system of a text is not (yet) familiar to the reader and the signifiers conceal the signified. By contrast, the presuppositions of 19th-century Realistic novels may have been so well assimilated by many readers living in our age that the signifiers are almost transparent to them; and so they are hardly conscious of the stylized nature of their text. Still, there are at least some readers for whom the validity of the absolute truthfulness of that system of presuppositions has already faded away and their state of conventionality has been restored. The degree of conventionality of any sign system is conditioned by history.

The same rule applies to the durative aspect of narrative time. Our channel of receiving information is narrow, and this

makes it necessary that for information to reach us in a chronological sequence. We perceive time on the basis of incoming information; we feel brevity if data follow one another quickly, long duration when they do so slowly. This forms the basis for the rhythm of the narrative. The reader's subjective sense of time plays such a role in judging this rhythm that it seems necessary to stress that time structure depends to a great extent on reception. We do not wish to say only that our calculation of time is defined by culture, age, and psychological factors, but also that the interpretation of any narrative work is influenced by the range of our reading. This breadth of knowledge is a kind of competence, a reference system which enables the reader to compare works.

As to the chronological order of reading, we can raise an important question. If a linear first reading implying a one-way memory is followed by a similarly linear second reading, then the two-way recollection characteristic of the latter makes it doubtful whether it is necessary to read every passage in consecutive order. At any rate, on re-reading we may make plans for ourselves, concentrate on what seemed to be essential on first reading, and segment the text according to what we took as macro-structures in our interpretation as a result of that first reading. One can determine from the presumable changes in the duration of reading that at our first acquaintance with the text we tend to read it in a relatively constant rhythm; whereas, on re-reading, this rhythm often shows wide swings, since the various parts do not hold our attention to the same extent. After we have identified

macro-structures, these integrate information. We skip certain details as irrelevant to our interpretation, while we read others more slowly than the first time, because they help us to elaborate our hypotheses concerning the artistic message. We find parts of certain passages more and less unclear and are attracted by obscurities which need further decoding. Without a doubt, uneven recollection at such times conceals many individual elements and leads to misreading.

Passing on to questions concerning the frequency of reading, we should remind ourselves of the cliché that re-reading to a significant degree advances the process in which information turns into experience. At a first reading, we fairly unconsciously recognize the structure based on analogies. On a second reading, we approach the work on the strength of hypothesis that have already been formed. To what extent these hypotheses become organized as a cohesive system of observations which can lead to a theory depends on our reading experience. It is certain that in reading we devote more attention to certain parts of the text and forget about other elements.

We have said that space is subordinate to time in the narrative. This thesis can be easily demonstrated. The introduction of a new topic often asks for a new paragraph. Deictic words simultaneously organize the time and the space of the narrative speech act around the speaking subject. The time and the space of the narrative speech act and the story can be identified with the help of contrasts such as "I" or "you" and "he" or

"she", "here" and "there", "now" and "then", "today" and "that day", "yesterday" and "the day before", "tomarrow" and "another time", "this" and "that". Montage is the result of an interaction that comes about between the chronology of the narrative speech act and the space of the story. The change from background to foreground, larger to smaller space and the inverse, as well as the description of space serve the continuity of the narrative. The arbitrary montage of the narrator and the embedding of another space, however, interrupt the narrative, while the consecutive story of separating characters contain both continuous and disjunctive elements. Continuity and discontinuity appear to the reader as the expected and unexpected. The predictable generally speeds up, whereas the unpredictable slows down reading. We can ascribe the expected to the recognition of conventionality, the common knowledge of the writer and the reader, the consciousness of a rule system validated by a given society. One of the factors which advance the evolution of literature is the reinterpretation of predicable and unpredictable. The expected, of course, depends on the frequency of reading, and this has a particular significance in narrative works. We interpret the beginning of a story in a completely different way if we know how it will end. This applies also to reading historical works. We expect much more from a book written on a period of which the basic events are familiar to us.

The space of first reading can be defined as a one-way space. The repetitions which create the structure only appear on second reading, because by then our recollection is two-way. We can recall later parts while reading earlier passages. Re-reading

grants a third dimension to the space of reading. We associate other texts more freely with the one we are reading. Our interpretation will be personal since the wider system of reference used, the imaginary library within us, varies from individual; no one has read exactly the same works as he/she, you, or I.

3. Point of View and Speech Act

The closer we get to the deep structure of narrative texts, the more obvious becomes the crucial importance of pragmatic factors. Any written story-telling is a recorded composite speech act, and as such involves a narrator and a narratee. Provided Searle is right in assuming that utterances with the same propositional content can differ in their illocutionary force, we must concede that to understand the meaning of any work we must recognize the illocutionary act performed by it. The important thing is to realize that with an epic work the task is to discover the narrator's and not the writer's intention. Despite our great respect for and indebtedness to Searle the linguist, we must disagree with some of his views on literature; in our opinion it is misleading to state that "in first-person narratives, the author often pretends to be someone else making assertions", for all story-telling necessitates a fictional, created narrator, this is a natural consequence of what Searle himself admits, of the fact that the author of a literary work pretends to perform illocutionary acts. [12] The hermeneutic task is to capture the story-teller's intent, which is a matter of recognizing narrative conventions.

The examination of the third level of the meaning of narrative texts, the definition of its modality must start with an analysis of the presuppositions of a pretended speech act, for only these can give a clue to the conditions and the purpose of that act. If we cannot recognize that purpose, the speech act will go wrong. Indoubtedly, performative sentences may help us in our decoding activity, but it would be an exaggeration to identify illocutionary acts with illocutionary verbs. Syntactical indicators and modal expressions might also be of great use for the reader, but he can never escape from meeting with special difficulties in trying to define the narrative situation of a narrative text. This is especially true of literary works of art. In narrative fiction "one and the same utterance will often fit into more than one category";[13] indirect speech acts play a far greater role than in natural languages, so that the same utterance will have an explicit primary and implicit secondary function, and the latter will be the more significant contribution to the meaning of the text. Last but not least , the pretended speech act can be interpreted only in a particular context of communication; the work itself will ask for a specific type of subjectivity, a kind of Stimmung. Using a sign system always implies that it can function only through us, which means that in the case of an epic work of art the addressee will not blindly follow the communicator's plan but will also have a plan of his own.

The interpretation of a modality leads to the next stage in the analysis of narrative texts, the understanding of the truth conditions or value structure of the fictional world. The difference

between narrative fiction and historiography is by no means radical in this respect. The same text may change its status: for late eighteenth-century readers The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire might have seemed to be the record of a real speech act, today most of us read it as literature. Certain modalities make only certain world images possible. Irony calls for epistemic, tragedy for doxastic, an elegiac sense of existence for boulomaeic, apocalyptic visions for deontic moods. In other words, irony implies knowledge of the world, tragedy necessitates an unquestioned belief in some values, elegy expresses preference or wishes, the addressee of an apocalyptic prophecy is obliged to accept hypotheses concerning the future.

The term "possible world" can be used only with some caution. Van Dijk's contention that sentences can be true or false and connected or disconnected [14] does not apply to fiction without significant modification: we can assign only two values to literary texts, since in them the true is identical with the connected. Outside the closed circle of simple forms whose validity is strictly limited to folk genres, all works of verbal art are composite speech acts. The different parts of such a text may cover a wide range of illocutionary modalities, but the whole functions as a macro-speech act. As the same story cannot be related in two different ways, the connectives expressing relations between the subordinated micro-speech acts cannot be divided into semantic and pragmatic elements, for it would be a gross simplification to assert that in a literary work the represented facts could be distinguished from their interpretations. In such texts no de-

scription is ever incomplete, and it never occurs that some part of the message is "conveyed by the text but not in the text", because "the speaker means more than what he says", [15] or at least it is not feasible to maintain such distinctions. In an attempt to answer the very difficult question of the truth conditions of a fictional world, one could, of course, resort to a range of alethic modalities and explain that in a parable like Der Prozeß the discursive element brings in this mood of the necessary and the obligatory, in a novel like Madame Bovary descriptions represent what is probable and known, whereas a romance like Wuthering Heights bears the stamp of the influence of the lyric, and therefore presents a world which is merely possible or permissive. Still, such generalizations are justified only if it is clear that probability in a work of narrative literature depends on the rules of the language game of the genre. The world of science-fiction is neither more nor less fictional than that of a naturalistic novel. The indicative mood is dominant in referential descriptions, prophetic works are of an imperative-conative character, interrogative modality is closely associated with irony, a commissive speech situation often goes hand in hand with an elegiac sense of being, permissive utterances frequently occur in fantastic tales. Each has its own convention of truthfulness.

What speech acts are possible in a narrative work? The referential is the one which should be mentioned in the first place. No narrator could do his job without it. Constative assertions achieved with syntactical devices such as proper names and

demonstrative pronouns are essential for the introduction and identification of existents in the story as well as for making the reader believe what is being described. If the story is made possible by reference, the narrative act by phatic elements establishing and maintaining the communicative situation, explaining the temporal and spatial ordering of events, and making metalinguistic comments on the rules of the language game.

The two basic modalities are supplemented by secondary speech acts. Each asks for a proper response, The imperative mood aims at obedience. In contrast to descriptive reference, the tone of exhortation, promise, command, request, or advice characteristic of prophecy is connected with not a past, but a future state. In most cases it also implies a negative truth condition, the conative element is often combined with undertones of refusal or even prohibition. The more conditional the promise or advice, the less didactic the parable.

Provided we subscribe to Searle's more recent classification of speech acts, [16] those mentioned by us so far can be identified with four of his categories. Referential assertives and phatic commissives are indispensable for both temporal narration and spatial description. Didactic discursive genres are characterized by the dominance of directives, whereas prophetic discursive texts make use of declarations. These last two modalities are closely related; a wide range of tones represent a transition from the imperative-conative character of the former to the ideological nature of the latter. The fifth class, that of

enctive expressives is a distinguishing feature of the lyric. Optative counterfactuals characterizing elegiac works are an important sublass of expressives. In dramatic works all the five types of illocutionary acts may be of equal importance, in epic genres any of them may occur, but only on condition that the first two determine macro-speech acts. There is no reason why we should not accept the presence of any speech act as a creator of undertones even in historiography, once we have admitted that this genre demands the primary importance of assertives.

Since the story is always subordinated to the narrative mood, the structure of the plot is determined to a great extent by the speaker's illocutionary act. Several factors, including the combination of state and process, event and action descriptions, or the use of compound events, consisting of one main event leading to the result of the compound event, and several auxiliary events, serving as conditions for the main event, may contribute to the complexity of the story, but, in the final analysis, it is always caused by the use of secondary narrator/s/. If this is identical with the primary narrator, we have a sequence of simple stories. A less additive arrangement is when the secondary narrator is the narratee of the primary story. In this case the two speech situations may give room for two distinct modalities. A further step is integrating compexity; if the secondary narrator is a character in the primary story, a wide range of interactions is possible, according to the importance of the role played by the secondary narrator in the primary story.

The status of the personae of the story is strongly dependent

on narrative modality. In folk or popular genres (fairy tale, western, detective story) these personae are reduced to functions, that is properties of stereotype sections, because of the unvaried conventional simplicity of the speech situation. In directive-declarative tales or parables the human agents in the story are representatives of certain attitudes, mouthpieces of ideologies, whereas commissive-optative romance makes use of psychological archetypes. It is only in the assertive-referential novel (using that term in a rather strict sense) that we meet characters who are meant to be fictional models of human individuals. The purely individual character of the personae of the story is, however, theoretically possible only in a historian's text; proper names can have their true status only in non-fiction.

Undoubtledly, point of view is largely connected with speech situation, but arriving at deeper and deeper sublevels of meaning, we should not fall into the trap of reducing their complicated relationship to simple identity. A narrator can approach his figure from inside and still use indirect speech. What is more, his aim may be greater objectivity, believing that a direct (quoted) interior monologue could not represent the unconscious. One of the most sophisticated structures of narrative texts is due to the interdependence of the speaker and the observer. It refers both backwards and forwards, to the spatial structure and the Weltbild of the text. A scene may start with a distant point of view, the observer may come closer and closer to his figures, and finally go back to his initial position; so that the rules of macro-segmentation will conform to those of

narrative perspective. It is also possible that the observer's distance prove to be the characters' modi existendi: less valued figures will be seen from a bird's-eye view.

The observer's stance is relative to two important factors: to the degree of his well-informedness and to his beliefs. Subjective narrators have more, objective narrators less information of the story than the personae. These two possibilities are interrelated not only with the use of indirect speech, but also with what after Aristotle and Northrop Frye could be called four levels of mimesis. A mythic and a heroic narrator looks up to his figures, because he regards them as qualitatively or quantitatively superior to himself. A realistic narrator identifies himself with his characters, an ironic narrator looks down upon them.

The extreme complexity of the interdependence of the three factors just mentioned is responsible for this difficulties the analyst of narrative works must face when he tries to move from the third to the fourth and deepest level of meaning.

4. World Vision

Why is it difficult to define the possible world created by a text? The interpretation of the truth conditions of a work owes much to a knowledge of the "actual" world, and this, we might concede, is always subjective, though does not necessarily belong to an ego. Understanding any literary text, in fact, is made possible only by the conventional knowledge of more or less autonomous states, processes, and their outcomes, a system of

beliefs accepted within a given community.

There is only one general standard in that understanding, a recognition of the mode of existence of the work of art. One certainly should not leave out of account how the reader must take different attitudes toward different genres, as in his response he must fully meet the conditions of the speech acts recorded in the text. Thus, it is quite lawful to apply to historiography the principle according to which "the literary is continuous with the nonliterary". It would be, however, too easy a solution to a very difficult problem to evoke the same principle in the interpretation of literary works of art. In other words, it would not take us very far to say that a novelist "does not believe for one moment that there actually was such a character", or that "most fictional stories contain nonfictional elements". The examples cited by Searle to illustrate this thesis, in particular, are not quite convincing. To make our point clear, let us quote what he says of two 19th-century novels:

> "(...) Tolstoy begins Anna Karenina with the sentence "Happy families are all happy in the same way, unhappy families unhappy in their separate, different ways." That, I take it, is not a fictional but a serious utterance"
> "(...) in War and Peace, the story of Pierre and Natasha is a fictional story about fictional characters, but the Russia of War and Peace in the real Russia, and the war against Napoleon is the real war against the real Napoleon." [17]

This empiricism is somewhat reminiscent of a vulgar distortion of Marxist aesthetics widespread in the 1930's and 40's. The

narrator of Anna Karenina is a created speaker and the text is a pretended illocutionary act from the first word to the last. It is quite possible that we are unable to see the philosophical basis behind the terms "serious" and "real", but they are not given full explanation in Searle's otherwise unquestionably very important book. At any rate, in War and Peace Napoleon is as much part of a fictional world as Natasha Rostova. What is more the artistic nature of an object derives not or at least not only from its morphological and semantic features, but mainly from our attitude to it, and surely we do not respond to the figure called Napoleon while reading Tolstoy's novel the same way as we respond to the historical figure Napoleon when reading a scholarly work on him. Aesthetic pleasure is dependent on an unbroken illusion that we are contemplating a fictional world. It is misleading to assume that literary genres differ according to "the extent of the author's commitment to represent actual facts," [18] we might take the risk of saying that it is rather the selection of those facts that may distinguish the author of Germinal from that of The Sacred Fount. A novel may be read as history, and a historian's work may be enjoyed as art, but aesthetic pleasure and the acquisition of historical information are entirely different activities.

The rules of literary story-telling are not the rules of implication, but those of the conditional. "The novel is not a reflection of the myriad aspects of social intercourse; it is, on the contrary, the mirror itself." [19] Its signified possible world forms an organic whole with its signifier, a particular

form; that is why its message cannot be rendered back into the non-fictional world, despite the fact that the former is dependent on the latter. The difference is fundamental on two levels: on the one hand, the novel as a genre with a strong encyclopaedic tendency may absorb all kinds of secondary speech acts and present an unresolved tension between contradictory world images, resulting in a complexity of value structure for which Bakhtin used the rather unhappy term "polyphonic" structure; on the other hand, the world of any novel can be considered closed in comparison with a more open non-fictional world.

Works of fiction contrast false and authentic values on three levels. God, society, and the individual are the three points of reference in the structuring of a possible world. Even the first is present in all literature, representing a metaphysical meaning the relevance of which cannot be abolished with the alleged disappearance of religion. "Methaphysics belongs to the nature of man." [20] At most we could say that sometime it may be transformed into ontology or even epistemology, but even so, the idea of an absolute certainty of truth which a narrator may put his trust in, even if denied, cannot be absent from a structure of values. "The god who acts here is not thought theologically, but purely ontologically namely as the highest being in whom all beings and Being itself are caused." [21]

That point of reference makes it possible to risk a few generalizations on the possible value aspect of temporal

structures and narrative situations. Tragic structures are located, as a rule, in the present, and involve a great, sudden, and unjustified loss in human values. In a comic work the use of ti is similar, but the hero is reconciled with society, a way is shown from crisis to solution. An apocalyptic sense of being expresses a contract between a gloomy present and a future day of judgement, followed by a happy state of affairs. Elegy works the other way round, starting from a relatively worthless present state and recalling a happier past. A consistently ironic interpretation of existence casts doubt on all values, and maintains a circularity of processes.

Undoubtedly, these five types of value structure are very rough schemes, but in our opinion all narrative texts create a possible world which could be described as a combination of them. Some of these combinations could be named and given a brief characterization, but the enormity of the task of a systematic classification of narrative world visions frightens us off, for it may lead to the analysis of individual works, which would be out of place here. The only final conclusion that seems to be worth formulating is that the individual character of any narrative text will be quite manifest on this fourth level; so we may discard as old-fashioned the view according to which the particularity or specificity of a narrative text is limited to the sphere of style. Detailed analyses could corroborate the hypothesis that not only the morphological features of a novel are changed in a translation, but also its message dependent on the semantic and pragmatic aspects of its modality.

Notes

1 David K. Lewis: Convention. A Philosophical Study, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, p. 46.

2 Teun A. van Dijk: Text and Context. Explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse, London and New York, 1977, p. 89.

3 Michel Zéraffa: Fictions. The novel and social reality, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 53.

4 Dijk: Op. cit. p. 107.

5. John R. Searle: Expression and Meaning. Studies in the theory of speech acts, Cambridge, 1979, p. 30.

6 Ibid. Xi.

7 Dijk: Op. cit. pp. 118, 122.

8 Lewis: Op. cit. p. 118.

9 David E. Cooper: Presupposition, The Hague - Paris, 1974, p. 26.

10 M. Szegedy-Maszák: Historical Poetics in Hungary, In: J. Odmark (ed.): Language, Literature and Meaning II., Amsterdam, 1980.

11 Zéraffa: Op. cit. p. 32.

12 Searle: Op. cit. pp. 69, 65.

13 Ibid. Viii.

14 Dijk: Op. cit. pp. 50-51.

15 Searle: Op. cit. pp. 74, 161.

16 Ibid. Viii.

[17] Ibid. pp. 59, 63, 70, 72, 74.

[18] Ibid. p. 73.

[19] Zéraffa: Op. cit. p. 44.

[20] Martin Heidegger: The End of Philosophy, London, 1975, p. 87.

[21] Ibid. p. 44.